



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Focusing on the 'Basics of the Work'



DR. DAVID SANDERS

In the few months I have served as Director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, one thing is clear – staff overwhelmingly impresses me. In every section and every Service Planning Area (SPA) office, your dedication, enthusiasm and expertise has been inspiring. It has also left me asking, “How do we use this energy to build a stronger and more efficient organization?” The answer is not found in new policies, programs or procedures. On the contrary, the answer focuses on the basics of the work you do every day by meeting the challenge to ensure that children grow up safe, physically and emotionally healthy, educated and in permanent homes.

First and foremost, we all have the responsibility to make sure that children do not languish in foster care and to ensure that they are not hurt while in our care.

Secondly, we need to move children into permanency more quickly. More of our resources must be committed to the front-end to help families create an environment of stability and ultimately keep children in permanent homes.

Thirdly, you have the expertise. I firmly believe that staff must feel authorized to make the critical decisions that are at the core of the work we do. Many of these decisions can be made on the SPA level to more quickly provide services directly to families in their communities.

Empowering staff also means providing workers on the frontline with the needed time and tools to make better decisions. This includes increasing the number of frontline staff who deal directly with families to assure all workers have adequate time to devote to these families.

We face some tough challenges in the months ahead. A looming budget crunch, on-going public scrutiny and organizational changes within the Department affect us all. But together, we can overcome these challenges by continuing to focus our energy and talent on the basics of the work we do to create positive outcomes for all the children and families under our care.

David Sanders, Ph.D.
Director



Now That MacLaren Has Closed — What's Next?

Before MacLaren Children's Center closed its doors in early March, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) began working to find permanent homes for approximately 200 children who were still housed at the facility. For six months before it closed, an internal team of DCFS staff worked to address issues and find permanent homes for the children.

Progress was swift – by early February, 131 of 200 MacLaren children were in the same placement they went to when they left MacLaren, including homes of parents and relatives, licensed foster homes, foster family agencies and smaller group homes. Eventually, placement was found for all of the children who previously called MacLaren home.

Lessons Learned

But the closure of MacLaren is not without continuing challenges. “What the experience of closing MacLaren has taught the Department is that we have to do a better job of planning for the permanency of children,” said John Oppenheim, DCFS Chief Deputy Director. “We have to develop more resources in the community, more Reception Centers and make sure that placements are well-matched with the kids' needs.

“But what this experience has also shown us is that we can find appropriate and stable placements for kids in the community,” added Oppenheim. “It is manageable and the resources can be developed. For the next couple of years, the system will be challenged.”

The most important measure in eliminating the need for an institution such as MacLaren, explained DCFS Director David Sanders, Ph.D., is to stop raising kids in foster care and to look at a long-term approach for planning their futures.

“There is much more work that we have to do,” said Sanders.

Planning for the Future

The quest to secure permanent placements for some of the Department's hardest-to-place children continues on a daily basis. The closing of MacLaren coincides with DCFS's development of methods for permanency, as well as new ways to provide better services to children and families by using a community-based approach to placement and finding resources.

More than \$8 million in County funds previously earmarked for MacLaren will be used to create new Family Reception and Conferencing Centers, expand Permanency Teams and Family Group Decision Making in the Service Planning Areas (SPAs), maintain the new Office of Health Care Planning (*see profile on page 3*), and further develop Triage Teams and the Wraparound program.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

SUMMER 2003

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- 2 • BUDGET IMPACT ON DCFS
- 3 • NEW BUREAU APPOINTMENTS
- 4 • ON THE LINE • SDM ROLLS OUT
- 5 • SPA SPOTS
- 6 • UPCOMING EVENTS • MESSAGE FROM THE COMMISSION



MACLAREN
CHILDREN'S
CENTER CLOSED IN
EARLY MARCH.

Department Braces Itself for Tough Financial Times

As many city and county departments throughout California brace themselves for the affects of local and state budget cuts, the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) has also prepared itself for one of the leanest budget years in a decade.

According to the Department's Bureau of Finance, although DCFS is facing a reduction in its budget, that reduction will not impact direct vital services to children and families and no layoffs are expected. Money absorbed by the closure of MacLaren Children's Center earlier this year, and the reduction of operating costs in areas such as overtime, training and recruitment, procurement, consultant services, and information technology have all helped to ease a \$32 million deficit.

Gov. Gray Davis' May 2003 revision to the state budget spared the Department from major cuts. Although four DCFS programs will be affected by the Governor's realignment proposal, there will not be a significant impact to the Department overall. The sharing ratios for federal, state and county funding were shifted to put more of the financial burden on the county and less on the state. However, tax revenue sources including increases in income tax and increases in the tobacco tax are expected to help ease the financial burden on the county.

"All in all, the Governor's proposed budget has protected us," said Tito Barin, the Department's Budget Officer, "and we are in better financial shape than many other county departments. The Governor's realignment proposal just changes the revenue stream of the money, in other words, the way we get the money."

At the end of June, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors held their final budget hearings for the 2003-2004 budget year, which began on July 1, 2003. At that time, the Board of Supervisors approved the Department's proposed budget, but had questions and required further clarification about the 2003-2004 Proposed Budget Assistance Payments.

The Department has gained funding for other programs due to the closure of MacLaren. \$8.3 million previously allocated for MacLaren will be transferred to Administration for use in other programs. The bulk of it will be used to create a series of Family Reception and Conferencing Centers. \$9.5 million of the MacLaren money will remain in a reserve account for additional needs in the future.

The following is an approximate breakdown of the proposed uses of the residual MacLaren money:

FAMILY RECEPTION AND CONFERENCING CENTERS	\$4.2 million
PERMANENCY TEAMS	\$1.1 million
OFFICE OF HEALTH CARE PLANNING	\$69,000
TEAM DECISION MAKING PROGRAM	\$734,000
FAMILY GROUP DECISION MAKING PROGRAM	\$671,000
BCP TRIAGE TEAMS	\$122,000
PUBLIC WRAPAROUND PROGRAM	\$393,000
WRAPAROUND INFRASTRUCTURE EXPANSION	\$51,000
ERCP GROUP SUPERVISORS	\$502,000
UNAVOIDABLE COSTS	\$385,000

Family Reception and Conferencing Centers

Family Reception and Conferencing Centers will provide emergency care in a child-friendly, more home-like setting where a child can be brought to wait while a social worker locates a relative or appropriate placement. Family conferencing facilities and supervised family visitations will also be available at the Reception Centers.

The first DCFS Family Reception and Conferencing Center located in the City of Paramount is expected to open this fall. The first of its kinds in Los Angeles County, the 3,500-square-foot facility was recently approved by the L.A. County Board of Supervisors for use as a Reception Center. Previously the County-owned Paramount Health Center, the building will undergo refurbishment to provide a 23-hour-a-day, 7-day-a-week operational location where children can wait in a comfortable setting while DCFS staff work to find them placement.

Reception Centers will allow social workers more time for screening, assessment and permanency planning. The Reception Centers will also provide a safe environment and a higher level of emotional support. While at the Reception Centers, children will receive short-term supervision, appropriate health, mental health and educational screenings.

In addition to the Paramount facility, two additional Reception Centers are planned for the near future.

Permanency Teams

To help with the long-term planning for the lives of children, DCFS has also established Permanency Teams.

Permanency Teams are composed of a DCFS permanency planning specialist, a resource specialist, a Family to Family program worker, a public health nurse, a Department of Mental Health worker and an educational advocate collaborating to determine the best permanent plan for the child. The Permanency Team role includes permanency planning, permanency alternatives, additional screening and assessment and service referrals.

Although some Permanency Teams are already in place, DCFS has plans to locate more teams in SPAs throughout the County and in all DCFS SPA offices. The teams are scheduled to be phased in over the next year.



ANGELA R. CARTER



JOAN SMITH

New Deputy Directors Head Bureaus of Administration and Finance

Two new Deputy Directors have been appointed to head the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Administration Bureau and Finance Bureau. Angela R. Carter and Joan Smith are both veterans of the Hennepin County Children, Family and Adult Services Department in Minneapolis, Minn.

Both Carter and Smith share responsibilities for directing and managing several aspects of the Department's administrative support services including budget, management, finance, operations, contracts and human resources. Both assist in formulating and implementing Department-wide administrative policies, reviewing current systems and developing and implementing changes in those systems. Both Carter and Smith have extensive experience in the area of Performance Based Contracting.

Carter, who began with DCFS in June, will lead the Department's Administration Bureau. In Hennepin County, she worked to deliver key services and products related to strategic management and planning, policy analysis, and research and performance measurement and evaluation. She has some of the same goals for DCFS.

"I am very interested in exploring ways to strengthen communication between the administrative support functions that I manage and the operations of the Department," said Carter.

"I believe that the purpose of support functions is to assist operations in achieving the outcomes we want for children. For example, I am interested in developing more direct linkages between program staff in Service Planning Area (SPA) offices and staff who develop and manage contracts."

Carter said she hopes to open the lines of communication among staff. "I want to see program staff including Children's Social Workers, Supervising Children's Social Workers, Technical Assistants and others who know the needs of children, to communicate about what resources they need."

Smith, who began at DCFS in May, heads the Finance Bureau. She was instrumental in implementing new finance programs and a new technology system in Hennepin County.

At DCFS, her vision includes developing financial and related systems that will help achieve Department outcomes. "We need to establish the outcomes we want to achieve as a Department, how we want to develop the service delivery system to accomplish those outcomes and then how we can finance the desired service delivery design."

Smith said she does see some areas for improvement. "We want to look at ways that we can create more flexibility in how we use funds and how we maximize federal, state and private resources that support our outcomes versus driving a particular service delivery model."

Strategies include working with staff in the Department and outside experts to build on existing strengths and to understand where improvements or changes are needed, and develop strong fiscal and related operations to ensure accountability.

Director of Health Care Planning to Oversee Psychiatric and Medical Needs of DCFS Children

Dr. Charles Sophy began his appointment in March as the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) new Director of Health Care Planning.

Dr. Sophy, a board certified family practitioner and adult and child/adolescent psychiatrist, will coordinate and monitor the medical and psychiatric treatment of children under DCFS care. Dr. Sophy will work to standardize medical and psychiatric services provided by DCFS and ensure that all evaluations are conducted on a best practices basis in order to create an immediate and comprehensive treatment plan for each child.

Dr. Sophy also will coordinate Departmental efforts specifically to address DCFS staff's understanding of the need and importance of permanency in the health of each child. Staff will be provided with training and oversight regarding medication management and associated health issues.

In addition, Dr. Sophy will coordinate with community physicians to provide the highest quality of care to children and families; and provide consultation in medical and psychiatric matters, including treatment and placement recommendations. He also will work with the County's health and mental health delivery systems including the Department of Mental Health and contracted providers.

Currently, the Department is looking at partnering with medical facilities to provide 24/7 evaluations of children when they enter the system. These evaluations will help DCFS staff determine the appropriate next steps.

From 2001 to 2003, Dr. Sophy served as Medical Director at MacLaren Children's Center under the auspices of the Department of Mental Health. Prior to that, Dr. Sophy served as a Medical Director, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry for the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health.



DR. CHARLES SOPHY

“ON THE LINE” IS A “DCFS NEWS” COLUMN FEATURING LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES’ CHILDREN’S SOCIAL WORKERS (CSWs) WHOSE ACHIEVEMENTS AND PRACTICES EPITOMIZE THE BEST IN SOCIAL WORK.

Structured Decision Making Rolls Out in the SPAs

One of the tools the Department is currently using to ensure consistent decision-making with respect to safety and risk and reduce out-of-home placements is Structured Decision Making (SDM). The use of SDM provides social workers with simple, objective and reliable tools to make the best possible decisions for individual cases and provide managers with information for improved planning and resource allocation.

For approximately one year, the Child Protection Hotline has been using SDM criteria to determine the response times for referrals. In addition, earlier this year SDM was introduced to all Children’s Social Workers in the Department’s Bureau of Child Protection. Staff in the Wateridge and Metro North offices have already been trained in the use of SDM and began using the system in May.

But the major training and implementation of SDM within the Department will occur from July through October, with a scheduled SDM roll-out in all of the remaining Service Planning Area (SPA) offices. The SDM rollout will be monitored closely by the Department through regular staff meetings to work out any implementation kinks.

It is expected that SDM will strengthen and support many of the social work practices currently being used by the Department, but it will take time to grasp.

“It will take about six months for staff to fully learn and feel comfortable with the tools,” said Dick Santa Cruz, who co-chairs the SDM Implementation Committee. “At least one staff in each office has received additional training in order to provide in-house SDM support,” he added.

If used consistently, SDM can improve assessments of family situations in order to better determine the protection needs of children. Other benefits include increasing consistency in case assessment and case management among staff, increasing the efficiency of staff to making the best use of available resources, and providing management with data needed for program administration, planning, evaluation and budgeting.

In 1998, DCFS was one of the original seven California pilot counties to implement SDM in cooperation with the California Department of Social Services. The SDM model and tools have been in use in other states for more than 10 years.

In the following weeks, an SDM training schedule will be posted on L.A. Kids. For more general information about SDM, log on to www.nccd-crc.org/crc/decision.htm.

Components of SDM

- **Response Priority** which helps determine if and when to investigate a referral
- **Safety Assessment** for identifying immediate threatened harm to a child
- **Risk Assessment** based on research, which estimates the risk of future abuse or neglect
- **Family Needs and Strengths Assessment** for identifying problems and establishing a service plan
- **Case Reassessment** to ensure that ongoing treatment is appropriate

Schedule of SDM Implementation in SPA Offices

(subject to change)

AUGUST

Santa Fe Springs, Belvedere, BSP

SEPTEMBER

Torrance, Lakewood, Century, Hawthorne, Pasadena, Pomona, Covina

OCTOBER

North Hollywood, Santa Clarita, West L.A., Lancaster, Adoptions

CSW Quick to Employ Family Preservation to Save Families

Bridgett Williams-Ben has been a CSW for the past 10 years, originally entering the Department as an intern. She currently works in the Torrance office in a Permanency Planning (PP) Unit.

In May, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors singled out Williams-Ben during Foster Care Awareness Week for special recognition for outstanding social work.

Williams-Ben enjoys PP work and has had great success in reuniting families. She likes working with kids that are at the tail end of the system and don’t know where they want to go. “When I see a situation where I can salvage a relationship, I quickly make a family preservation referral. It works. I just recently reunified a mother and child after 15 years. Those are the best stories; putting families back together,” she said.

Williams-Ben shared some of her social work skills that have served her well. “I am very thorough with my court reports. This comes from good examples and good supervision. My supervisors trust me as a worker and allow me to fail. I can speak with them one on one allowing me to go through my thought process and figure out what works best for my families.”

Patrick Meiklejohn, Williams-Ben’s supervisor, agreed, “Bridgett represents a different kind of worker, one who will experiment, take some chances, and work very difficult cases. She writes extremely detailed reports way in advance of the hearing, thus giving the SCSW both the time and opportunity to make a good critique; as a result, she has grown both in wisdom and knowledge.”

Gaining a family’s trust is the first step to Williams-Ben’s success. She encourages her clients to achieve by using herself as an example.

And she listens. “That’s the only way you are going to find a solution. You have to listen to learn what’s really going on,” she said. Many of the emancipated youth she has worked with, ages 22 and older, still maintain relationships with her and seek her advice. She is even recruiting one to become a social worker.

“It’s the little things that make a difference. If I see that a family is running short on food, I will personally do a referral to the food bank. I’m quick to utilize Family Preservation to strengthen a family. By doing these things, I’m guaranteeing a better outcome. When I get those referrals, I feel the family is crying for help. You should get in your car, see that family, find out what is going on and figure out how you can help. I’m not looking for the shortcuts. It doesn’t work. You have to take the long road.”

Maintaining a positive attitude affects all aspects of the job in the office and with her families, as well. Said Williams-Ben, “I wake up in the morning thinking, ‘I’m going to make a change today.’ I take that attitude every day when I go in people’s houses. You have got to have a love for this job, a love for people and a love and a respect for your community, too. This job is most rewarding when I go to bed at night and I know that my kids on my caseload are safe in their homes.”

If you know a CSW who is worthy of special recognition in “DCFS News,” e-mail Neil Zanville of the DCFS Public Affairs Office at zanvin@dcfs.co.la.ca.us.



BRIDGETT WILLIAMS-BEN

“I’m not looking for the shortcuts...”

You have to take the long road.”

— CSW Bridgett Williams-Ben



SPA SPOTS

In every issue, "DCFS News" will provide information about what's happening in the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Service Planning Areas (SPAs). If you have SPA news to report, please submit your ideas to Stuart Riskin of the DCFS Public Affairs Office at riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us.

DCFS Director Initiates Homestudy Completion Project

In a concerted effort to find permanent homes for children who are awaiting adoption, DCFS Director David Sanders, Ph.D., recently initiated a 120-Day Adoption Homestudy Completion Project in the SPAs. The project, which began on June 16, 2003 and will go through October 16, 2003, is intended to free up adoption workers so they can immediately complete approximately 2,056 adoption homestudies. Throughout the duration of the project, all SPA offices will keep all Terminated Parental Rights cases, meaning that if an applicant does not move forward and complete the homestudy during this time frame, an alternative permanent plan for the child will be created. Alternatives could include legal guardianship (a.k.a. Kin-GAP) for relatives. Foster parents will be informed that the Department will begin looking for an approved adoptive home for the child.

On October 16, all adoption workers will resume their applicant/child positions.

Black Adoption Festival Held

On June 21, 2003, DCFS Adoptions Division held the 24th annual Black Adoptions Festival (BAF). More than 50 families attended who want to give children permanent homes. The children enjoyed lunch, clowns, a petting zoo, pony rides, games and crafts. Last year, 21 children were matched with prospective adoptive parents as a result of the BAF. Adoption Fairs continue to be a great way to match children with prospective adoptive families. If you are interested in enriching your life through adoptions or know someone who is, please call the DCFS Adoption Placement and Recruitment Unit at 1-888-811-1121, extension 2. Also, for more information on adoptions, check out these websites: www.adoptuskids.org, www.cakidsconnection.org, www.adoptablekids.com.

Teamwork Pays Off

DCFS and community teamwork is essential in the work the Department does. The West Los Angeles office demonstrated this when Emergency Response Worker Nora Ervin, received a referral late one afternoon about six children who were living in an incredibly filthy home. Upon her initial visit, Ervin found the home to be so filthy and unlivable that masks were required to enter. However, the mother and the children were not home when the worker arrived. The apartment manager helped the investigation by calling Ervin at 9 p.m. and alerting her that the family had returned. Meanwhile, back at the office, numerous colleagues, including an Assistant Regional Administrator volunteered to stay late and help with this response call. At this time of night, the DCFS van is not available, so Children's Social Worker (CSW) Lynn Herrion volunteered to help transport the children. Four other West Los Angeles CSWs were standing by to assist with finding placements. LAPD, Wilshire Division, was contacted and agreed to meet the CSWs at the family home. Later that night, the children were detained and brought to safety, thanks to Ervin's determination, co-workers help and working with the community. Ervin is now working as a Dependency Investigator.

Teen Club Gains Life Perspective

Members of the Covina office's Teen Club recently gained some valuable perspective on their lives. Upon seeing a video about the children of Africa orphaned by the AIDS epidemic, the teens decided to take action. They collected \$200 to adopt a child, providing that child with school books, uniforms and lunches for an entire year. As a result of their adoption, many of the Covina Teen Club youth expressed a desire to work harder in school and in their homes. They say that they now appreciate more of what they have.

DCFS Kids Enjoy a 'Day at Disneyland'

The North Hollywood, Santa Clarita, and Pasadena offices coordinated a "Day at Disneyland" trip for 20 DCFS children on June 27, 2003. This trip was a memorial for an exceptional volunteer, Audrey Schneider. Schneider volunteered for many years with the North Hollywood "Adopt A Child Abuse Caseworker" (ACAC) program and passed away recently. As a tribute to her love and support of children, donations were made to send DCFS children on this wonderful event. This was a first time trip to Disneyland for the 20 children, ages five to 11 years old.

Dedicated Nurse Receives Certificate of Appreciation

On June 5, 2003, David Caley, Public Health Nurse in the North Hollywood office received a "Certificate of Appreciation" from Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich for his exceptional work with an emancipated youth. Caley facilitated Medi-Cal approval and secured a plastic surgeon from Children's Hospital to perform cosmetic surgery for a young man who needed the surgery due to a 100-pound weight loss.

Thousands of Gifts Collected for Holiday Gift Program

The Self Realization Fellowship Lake Shrine Church in Pacific Palisades concluded the fifth annual Holiday Gift Program for Foster Youth for the West Los Angeles office. Due to the generosity and dedication of the Lake Shrine members, social workers will deliver more than 400 gifts with a total value of almost \$40,000 to foster children.

The program began modestly in 1998 with 200 foster children receiving approximately \$22,000 worth of gifts which especially focus on older youth. It has now turned into a major effort. The program planning begins in early October when social workers are asked to make out a wish list for the most needy and deserving kids on their caseloads. By the second week of November, volunteers put up the wishes on a tree in the lobby. By early December, volunteers deliver truckloads of gifts to the West Los Angeles office, straight to the social workers in plenty of time for holiday delivery to the children. More than 40 parishioners volunteer each year.

'With Love, Grandma' Program Provides Gifts for Foster Kids

The "With Love, Grandma" Program, founded by volunteer Jeri Davis meets the needs of DCFS children for any request that cannot be provided by a Resource Coordinator. Gifts may include funding for sport camps, medical and dental expenses. The program also provides backpacks for children who have just been taken into custody or "crisis" day gifts for children dealing with painful situations such as parents not showing up for visits.

Some DCFS children have been receiving gifts from the "With Love, Grandma" Program for six years. These children will continue to receive items as long as they are in the system no matter what county they are moved to or what agency is handling their case. This program is only intended for foster children in the care of a licensed foster home or group home. For more information, contact Monica Mauer, Resource Coordinator, SPA 1, at (661) 723-4354.

UPCOMING EVENTS

THE BYRON SCOTT CELEBRITY GOLF CLASSIC

Friday, September 12, 2003
9 a.m.

Brookside Country Club

Information: (213) 639-4821

This annual fundraising event raises money for the youth served by DCFS.

The day will include goodie bags for all golfers, putting contests and team awards. Sponsored by DCFS and Youth Opportunities United Inc.

BRIDGES TO INDEPENDENCE RETREAT

Friday, September 26, 2003 &
Saturday, September 27, 2003

Camp Craggs, Malibu Canyon

Information: (213) 580-1838

An overnight camp for DCFS youth ages 16 to 18 who are eligible for Independent Living Program Services. Sponsored by DCFS, United Friends of the Children and the California Community Foundation.

READY 4 REAL: A COLLABORATIVE EMANCIPATION PLANNING PROCESS

Saturday, October 4, 2003

9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Location TBA

Information: (213) 351-0239

An all-day conference for youth, social workers, probation officers and caregivers to learn more about the planning process for emancipating youth.

ART @ AZUSA

Saturday, October 25, 2003

8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Azusa Pacific College

Information: (213) 351-0159

DCFS joins Azusa Pacific University to provide art instruction and a tour of the campus to 200 foster youth 13 to 18 years old.

NATIONAL ADOPTION DAY CELEBRATION

Saturday, November 22, 2003

9 a.m.

Edmund D. Edelman Children's Court

Information: (213) 351-6661
Hundreds of children are adopted every year during this special event. Ceremonies finalizing adoptions will be held in courtrooms throughout the Children's Court during this special Saturday session.

To submit upcoming DCFS events, please e-mail Stuart Riskin in the DCFS Office of Public Affairs at riskis@dcfs.co.la.ca.us.

MESSAGE FROM THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

For the past five years, I have had the opportunity of serving on the Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families and the privilege of being selected as Chair in 2001. We share the commitment to work on behalf of the children of Los Angeles County. Our role is to advise the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors on such matters and to oversee the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). Visionary leadership is the hallmark of my fellow Commissioners, who dedicate their time and skills in working to actualize the values of preventing harm to children, preserving families and finding permanent homes for children.

This past year, Commissioner Janet Teague retired from the Commission. During her almost decade on the Commission, she worked on such issues as Family Preservation Policy Roundtable and the Children's Planning Council's implementation of the Safe Haven Law. However, on an individual and personal level, she continues to provide joy to hundreds of children in out-of-home care during each holiday season. Since 1995, she has also provided scholarships to emancipating youth.

Stellar and compassionate contributions are also made by other Commissioners who include Vice Chair Carol O. Biondi, Vice Chair Harriette Williams, Jana Cooley, Patricia Curry, Lily Griego, Chuck Hurewitz, Helen Kleinberg, Daisy Ma, Robert G. McCaman, Dr. La-Doris McClaney, Robert Petersen, Sandra Rudnick and Rev. G. Lind Taylor.

This year we also welcomed Trinity Wallace Ellis, who joined the Commission as a Youth Representative. As a former foster youth and currently a relative caregiver, she provides a unique and valuable voice as we work on issues that affect children and families.

Our staff is the glue that helps the Commission in its endeavors. Our Executive Director is Dana Blackwell. She is ably supported by Elizabeth Hinton, Executive Secretary, and Cynthia Schuster, staff assistant. Please feel free to call the office at (213) 974-1558 should you wish the assistance of the Commission.

We are extremely pleased with the Board of Supervisors' selection of Dr. David Sanders to head DCFS. Prior to his arrival, Dr. Sanders invited the Commission to work with him in partnership. We welcome this opportunity and share the commitment that each child is insured opportunities to grow and develop in a safe, nurturing and healthy environment. We further support the direction to support and strengthen families so children will live in homes that provide opportunities.

Nina Aguayo Sorkin, LSCW/ACSW

Chair, Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families

LOS ANGELES COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

YVONNE BRATHWAITE BURKE

Chair, Second District

GLORIA MOLINA

First District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY

Third District

DON KNABE

Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH

Fifth District

LOS ANGELES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

425 Shatto Place, Los Angeles, CA 90020

www.dcfis.co.la.ca.us

Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-540-4000

Adoptions and Foster Care Information:

1-888-811-1121

Director

DAVID SANDERS, PH.D.

Chief Deputy Director

JOHN OPPENHEIM

"DCFS NEWS" STAFF

Editor

LOUISE GRASMEHR

Writers

STU RISKIN

NEIL ZANVILLE

Photography

RICHARD CERVANTES

"DCFS News" is published by the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, Office of Public Affairs. For article ideas and submissions, e-mail grasml@dcfs.co.la.ca.us, or fax to (213) 738-9257. All submissions are subject to review and editing.